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Integrating topics of citizenship and multicultural values into the curriculum of teacher education

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Innovations in the structure and the curriculum of the Primary Education Programme

Primary Teacher Education at the University of Ostrava is a four-year programme. The academic year is divided into two semesters, each consisting of thirteen weeks. Each year from 1992 to 1998 a group of students would follow an innovative curriculum called the 'Alternative Programme'. Research into the impact of this transformed curriculum has demonstrated its benefits, and therefore all students have followed the modified curriculum since 1999.

The major innovations concern the module 'Theory and Practice of Primary Education', which is taught in the sixth and the seventh semesters. Throughout the course of the two semesters, students prepare, realise, and evaluate their individual pedagogical project. They are also asked to write three related essays and thus prove their readiness for the profession of a teacher, and their ability to reflect on their teaching practice and skills in the area of the pedagogical creativity and synthesis. Other objectives of the new course are for students to demonstrate the ability to relate their projects to what they have learnt in the courses of Pedagogics, to the various subject methodologies, and to the courses in their chosen special field of study (e.g. Drama in Education courses).

In the sixth semester students select the theme of their projects and the school subjects the project will refer to. They state their projects' objectives, choose one or more methodology lecturers to become their consultants, and look for relevant literature and journals. Students also decide on the length of their projects, the age groups of children they wish to work with, the schools and the form teachers. Each student communicates with the selected school, introduces his/her project's objectives, and negotiates the conditions for conducting the project and resolving the selected problem area.

The theme of the project can be related to one of the courses of the Primary Teacher Education or to more courses if the student wishes to carry out a cross-curricular project. In the latter case, the student chooses several lecturers from the different subject methodologies.

During the sixth semester each student formulates a question from the theory and practice of primary education that he/she would like to investigate through the project. The problem needs to be related to the topics in the final examination in Pedagogics. It is important to stress that each student in the sixth semester chooses to inquire into one of the final examination topics. The final oral examination takes place at the end of the eighth semester.

At the beginning of the seventh semester, students undertake their projects within the framework of a three-week practice. The project is usually planned for a week. Student use the first week to map the conditions for the project, and for making changes in the projects' plans so that it suits the conditions at the school. Students record these changes in writing. They carry out their projects in the second week. In the third week they finalise

the work, for example completing the activities that were not successful or for which they did not have enough time. They also evaluate the pedagogical and psychological problems that arose during the project. In the remaining ten weeks of the seventh semester they evaluate the results of their projects and write a report. They evaluate the results of the projects from the point of view of the formulated goals and contents, and also from the point of view of any special conditions existing at the school, in the class, and with children in the class. Students are also asked to continue writing about the selected problems that they were monitoring. The third seminar paper students are required to submit is an essay on the related final examination topic. Students consult on any specific methodology questions with their lecturer during the seminars. All three papers are evaluated and assessed in the seventh semester, but they also are part of the written material used for the final examination in Pedagogics and Psychology.

In the eighth semester students present all results of the pedagogical synthesis and creativity at the final examination in Pedagogics, Psychology, and Methodology of the specialised field of study. The project practice has an important function in the development of students, from the copying of role models, which takes place in the first stage of the study, and in the observation practice, and which leads them to the accomplishment of the independent creative project. It also attempts to give them the courage to try out new approaches and teaching attitudes, inspired by the study of alternative educational theories and approaches. It is assumed that the experience gained in the project practice is transferable to students' own teaching practice, if students have become convinced that they are capable of creative work, if they understand the necessity to introduce innovative approaches, and if they are able to interpret the reality in which something does not happen as planned. The students' evaluation of the newly introduced practice and the evaluation of other innovations of the Primary Teacher Education Programme are now being researched.

Developing understanding of the multicultural world through drama

Drama in Education

Drama in Education (DiE) is a system of active social and art-oriented learning that uses principles of drama, theatre and children's playing. It offers a variety of educational situations to explore historical and contemporary themes through role play and improvisation. The focus in DiE is on dramatic moments that arise when different elements conflict. Role play allows participants to view given situations from different perspectives, experiment with them, develop an understanding of complex problems and search for solutions. Many abilities can be developed through drama, but the ability to accept responsibility for one's decisions and their consequences, tolerance and social adaptation are among the most important.

Drama in Education at the University of Ostrava

Second year students of Primary Education choose one of seven special fields of study to acquire an extra qualification. Drama in Education (DiE) is one of the special fields. Drama students are required to attend five compulsory modules in the course of six semesters: DiE - Didactics, DiE - Current Approaches, DiE - Methods, Theatre in Education, and Selected Chapters from DiE Theory. Most of these modules last two semesters. Students may also attend a few optional modules (e.g. Drama as a Teaching Method). In their third year students regularly attend primary schools, where they conduct

their teaching practice. Students become qualified Drama teachers provided they pass the final exams at the end of their programme.

Drama in Education in Czech Primary Schools

Primary schools in the Czech Republic follow one of three national curricula. In schools following the curriculum *Obecna skola*, Drama is taught as a subject in its own right. In the two other curricula, drama is recommended as a teaching method to be used in various school subjects, especially in Czech language and literature, foreign languages, history, citizenship education, sciences, arts, and music.

Connecting university studies to teaching practice

Michal Ondrejčík, a student of Primary Education and Drama, chose to explore the values of Native American culture in his project carried out with nine- to eleven-year-old children of a primary school. Michal was to a considerable extent inspired by a drama lesson taught by two lecturers at the University of Ostrava. One of the lecturers became Michal's consultant during the preparatory phase of his project. The conception of the individual projects students prepare for their teaching practice has been described in the first part of this article. The student's account of his project follows: an outline of the drama lesson that motivated the student is attached. The primary school where the project was conducted follows the curriculum *Obecna skola*, in which drama has its place not only as a teaching method but also as a unique school subject. The student decided to use drama methods in his teaching. Since one of the project's aims was to find out what the children's priorities in life are, several objectives of the school curriculum were related to the project.

The project touched upon several topics of the school subject *Prvouka*, which can be described as the basics of social and natural sciences. The subject is taught to children aged from six to eight, that is the children who observed the final part of the student's project. The following syllabus topics concern identity and multicultural values:

- Meeting other people (social communication)
- Members of a family and relationships between them
- Expressing emotions and respect in a family
- Taking care of handicapped and ill people
- Friendship, friends, school fellows
- Close and unknown people.

These themes can be explored very well through drama and are also related to the Drama in Education objectives stated in the *Obecna skola* curriculum. Several of the DiE and *Prvouka* objectives that are related to identity and a multicultural society and that were met in Michal Ondrejčík's project are:

An example of a drama lesson aimed at issues of a multicultural society

Theme: An Encounter of the Native American Indians' Culture with the Culture of New Settlers.

Stage 2 (Forms 4 – 5, children 9 to 11 years old):

- to seek and be aware of one's identity
- to develop an understanding of others
- to acquire the skill of entering into someone else's situation (the ability to be empathetic)
- to develop friendship and family relationships
- to be able to collaborate in teamwork
- to develop communicative and social skill
- to become reliable and to be able to rely on others
- to explore ethical issues, such as: tolerance, xenophobia, honour, betrayal, bravery, cowardice, fear, bullying, the power of money, etc.

Structure of the lesson:

Stage 1: Context-building activities

Stage 2: Role-playing

Stage 3: Discussion

Stage 4: Final stage

Stage 1: Preparation stage – Context-building activities

Aim: to create the atmosphere of Native American culture

All participants work simultaneously, they improvise for themselves.

Listening to a tape – music typical of Native Americans

Ritual dance – children improvise movement with their eyes closed (aim: psychophysical relaxation and developing creativity in movement)

Rhythm games with one's body – pupils create the rhythm of a ritual using various parts of their bodies (aim: to develop concentration)

Adding more sounds (and words)

Preparation for entering roles

A day in the life of a native man, woman, child, tribe's chief, medicine man - children take on the roles of Native American people (aim: to acquire an understanding of the differences between the suggested social roles and to create a more realistic vision of the life of Native Americans)

Stage 2: Whole-Group Role-play

Aim: to acquire an understanding of problems that arise when new settlers come

Pupils are divided into two groups – two native tribes.

Choosing a name for the tribe and selecting the medicine man – children are also asked to provide the reasons for their choices.

Preparing a ritual celebrating an important event in the life of the tribe – the two groups show each other their rituals and then discuss the rituals

Defining space – the land of the Native Americans – available material and furniture is used to represent the place where the drama is happening, i.e. the area where the natives have come to live

Settling the two tribes in the land – a drama improvisation with potential conflicts as the participants are now aware that they can use ‘guns’ to kill living creatures (they can ‘kill’ by touching someone or something with their hands)

Arrival of white farmers – teacher in the role of a farmer comes seeking land to build a farmhouse and fields. The farmer has got a more advanced gun (he only needs to point his finger at his victim to kill).

Developing improvisation – participants improvise; if necessary, the teacher introduces dramatic tensions and conflicts

Stage 3: Discussion

Participants discuss the conflicts between the two different cultures that arose from the improvisation and relate them to reality. Discussing the problems allows the children to step out of the situation they have created. Participants reflect on their experience. They also try to find the causes and consequences of the conflicts discussed. The experience gained in the drama helps children to generalise the potential problems of a multicultural society and to remember facts.

Participants may decide to explore the conflict situation through an improvisation again, this time from different points of view.

Suggestion for further work: structured drama work gives opportunities to focus on learning about other people’s culture, lifestyles, traditions, about real historic events and their consequences.

Stage 4: Final stage

Confrontation of different cultures – children suggest situations in which various cultures confront each other and dramatise their cases. They work in several groups so that different examples of such situations and various approaches to them can be explored.

Seeking ideal solutions to problems arising from the confrontation of different cultures. Pupils try to find possible solutions to solve conflicts successfully in a whole-group role-play.

The description of a teaching practice project comprising the research into the preferences of cultural values of children 9 to 11 years old: a student perspective

It has become an inseparable part of our practice that students in their fourth year take part in one of the demanding tests of preparation for their future profession, an independent project prepared for and carried out during a teaching practice. The project is from one to three weeks long and the students select areas according to their interests in order to work in the fields that are close to them. They may select an integrated or a monothematic project. Students make their own decisions about the length of their projects, the place of the realisation, and the selection and resolving of a particular problem from the theory and practice of primary education.

What has been beneficial for me?

The huge area of independent creativity and the conditions which are offered to us are not at all limiting. The utilisation of the possibilities of independent decision-making allow me to decide how far I can go, if I will manage it, to look at myself, and the chance for self evaluation.

We were also given room for mutual co-operation. In the sixth semester each student presented his/her own preparation for the project. These seminars were undertaken in the spirit of our mutual interests and co-operation, and in the creation of the work by our whole team. Each student selected a lecturer to become a consultant of their project, and the lecturers from various departments of the faculty were invited to work with one another.

I decided to realise my project at the Primary School in Ivancice u Brna, Reznovice. It is a very small school where usually two age groups work in one classroom at the same time (e.g. the 1st form and the 2nd form; the 3rd and the 5th form together). My original goal was to prepare a three week long project on the theme 'What has the Native American culture left for today's society?' for the third form, following the curriculum *Obecna škola*. I had already selected to explore the issue 'Which values, from the point of view of the content of education, are preferred by pupils of the third form of a primary school?'

The main idea of the project was to transform the class and its students, both internally and externally, into an American Indian village in which we could use Drama in Education to experience the Native American culture, and to become American Indians. On the basis of this experience the students created their idea of a day in a Native American village from an early morning to a late evening. This performance was then presented to the rest of the school and to a nursery school.

Another part of the project was the final debate with children on the topic of 'Which values have been left to us by the culture of Native Americans?' and what to do when two different cultures meet and their priorities are built on different bases.

And what was the result?

When I had become aware of the conditions at the school and consulted the headmistress, I thought I would take advantage of the chance to undertake the project not only in the third form, but at the same time in the fourth, and fifth forms and also with the indirect participation of the first and second forms. I also discussed and agreed with the after-school supervisor about facilities after the school day. What happened next? There were many hours of preparations, consultations, and changes made in the school timetable. I participated in the teaching in the third and fifth classes, the fourth class was taught by the headmistress.

Children found that it was possible to count in a different system than in the decimal one; they realised the importance of Columbus' arrival in the Americas for the people; and the kinds of plants and other things brought from the Americas to Europe. The children were appalled when they heard how the Europeans had pushed European culture through the Native Americans.

The exploration of the Native American culture and traditions took place through discussion, work with literature, and looking for information in books. The children created their own clothing decorated only with natural materials and colours, they produced musical instruments, ceramics, works of art, decorations, colours, and make-up for their faces, the shamans' magic wands, etc. They also created, with teachers, a dance, the ritual of welcoming a new day and the sun, and every child crushed their own grain of maize between stones. Impatient children more than once found that the grain flew away and became lost in the grass. We sang every morning together the song of Native

Americans called the 'Song for the Rising Sun'. At the end of the project the children presented the performance: 'A day in a village of Native Americans'.

After the performance, the **values** of the children and of Native Americans were discussed and compared. The children had been introduced to and had 'experienced' the Native American culture, and therefore they were able to discuss the priorities of Native Americans.

The third form, 13 eight- to nine-year-old children

Our Values:

1. Family love and having brothers and sisters
2. Respect for life
3. Peace
4. Friendship

Note: This task was very difficult for the students of the third form, they needed the values written on paper in order to see them. They felt also the need to have their own values in the rank. The discussion during this work was not successful.

Native Americans' Values:

1. Their relationship to nature
2. Faith
3. Love
4. Family
5. Courage and strength

The fourth form, 17 nine- to ten-year-old children:

Our Values:

1. Family
2. Interests + money (the children could not agree on the order and therefore they put both in second place)
3. Health
4. Home, nature, love
5. Friends
6. Self education
7. Holidays
8. Information
9. Property

Note: A huge debate started in this class which was not directed, and during which the children were not listening to others. They did not pay respect to others, the decisions were taken on the basis of voting, the children argued and shouted.

Native Americans' Values

1. Nature
2. Faith
3. Honour
4. Family
5. Property

The fifth form, 7 ten- to eleven-year-old children:

Our Values:

1. Health, love, and the faith in the family
2. Education and friends
3. Peace between peoples and nature

Note: The children in the fifth form were discussing independently, everyone had his/her own rank of the values which the child had prepared before the work. They put their ranks in order according to importance and they did the same when they prepared the rank of the values of Native Americans. The discussion took place as follows: 'All right, but I think this because'. They co-operated and tried to implement all ideas in order to create one satisfying solution for all.

The rank of the values of Native Americans:

1. Harmony between Native Americans and nature
2. Faith
3. Courage
4. Property

An interesting debate began in the common meeting of all three forms on the theme of solving problems in the multicultural area. The children presented their attitudes and opinions, and their suggestions of what to do when they meet a person whose values are different from theirs. The result was their mutual agreement that the respect for others and for the values of a different culture is necessary.

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